

Iraqi Media Watch: March 21, 2006

Current Translations from the Iraqi Press

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Al-Sabah

Al-Sabah, Iraq's semi-official paper, reports on the continuing problems between the city council of Basra (south) and British forces. The council just rejected a proposal to grant British companies any investment opportunities in the oil sector, perhaps in favor of a counter-proposal submitted by the Russians.

Hakim al-Mayyah, a member in the Basra city council, told the paper that "the people of Basra do not want to see British forces in the streets of their city, therefore we cannot accommodate Britain's wish in oil contracts," citing the absence of a law regulating the work of foreign companies in the country.

The decision comes as part of the boycott of British forces after the abuses of Iraqi citizens and Britain's refusal to apologize for such acts. If anything, this is an indicator that the oil of Basra is already out of the jurisdiction of the central government. Similar action is being taken in Kurdistan, where the government began negotiations with foreign companies to exploit the oil in that region. Of course, there is no legal basis for these actions by local authorities in Basra and Kurdistan. But this is only to be expected when the jurisdictions are not defined. Currently, Iraq operates according to everyone's ability to create facts on the ground or set a precedent.

The paper also reports in another article that forced migration of Sunnis from Shi'i areas and Shi'a from Sunni areas (often involving murders and other intimidation) is becoming a problem beyond toleration.